AFB BULLETIN

Legislation Series No. 9

October 1957

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND, Inc.

15 WEST 16TH STREET • NEW YORK 11, N. Y. • WATKINS 4-0420
CABLE ADDRESS: FOUNDATION, NEW YORK

HON. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, Honorary President

*M. ROBERT BARNETT
Executive Director

*HELEN A. KELLER, L.H.D., LL.D.
Counselor, Bureau of National and International Relations

July 16, 1957

SPECIAL RELEASE

FROM: M. Robert Barnett
Executive Director

The American Foundation for the Blind, a national research and information agency, has demonstrated for years its very keen interest in all proposed legislation which would affect the lives of blind persons in the United States. Recently a Bill was introduced in the United States Senate (S. 2411) which should not be ignored by us as an organization, but also should receive the very careful attention of every person who has responsibility for or interest in the question of extension of benefits and services to blind persons.

The American Foundation for the Blind has not, as of this writing, expressed its formal opinion with regard to S. 2411 in full. We have, however, viewed the introduction of the Bill as a regrettable incident which is likely to cause one of the most serious philosophical debates yet experienced in our field. On the face of it, we cannot help but be opposed to the measure, because we believe its basis to be emotional rather than logical and thoughtful.

We would like to be of service to anyone concerned with either the specific content of the proposed law or with the underlying reasons which have made it come up for consideration. Meanwhile, we think that the attached copy of a Resolution adopted by the American Association of Workers for the Blind will serve to indicate that we at least believe that no such measure should be enacted into law without intensive study and patient deliberation.

41932-MIGEL

RESOLUTION ADOPTED
BY
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WORKERS FOR THE BLIND

July 12, 1957
Chicago, Illinois

WHEREAS, the American Association of Workers for the Blind has long demonstrated that one of its principal functions is to provide the benefit of its extensive knowledge about the problems of blindness to those leaders in our American society who are responsible for the reflection in legislation of sound social thinking; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Senator John Kennedy, United States Senator of Massachusetts has introduced Senate Bill S2411 entitled "Protection of the Rights of the Blind to Self-Expression Through Certain Organizations" which, in the opinion of this Association, is not only unnecessary and unjustified but also is a Bill which embodies a completely unsound and retrogressive concept of the responsibilities and privileges of blind persons as citizens; and

WHEREAS, it has been conclusively shown over the years that the great majority of blind persons prefer to be considered as normal members of society who with the special aid which our government has made possible can pursue lives free of dependency; and

WHEREAS, public and private agencies serving the blind seek and use at every opportunity the advice of professionally responsible blind persons as a guide in the development of services as a supplement to their professional processes for determining the needs and problems to be met; and

WHEREAS, the proposed legislation, if enacted, would create an arbitrary and unwieldy system of review and supervision of all federally-financed benefits or services on behalf of blind persons by professionally unqualified groups; and

WHEREAS, such reviews would in effect make these blind persons supervisors of the federal agencies and programs authorized to make grants-in-aid to the states, or other services such as research and expansion of professional personnel, for the benefit of all the blind population; and

WHEREAS, such administrative procedure would impair the efficiency of federal programs concerned with the general welfare of blind persons such as the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, with its components, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Public

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Health Service, Office of Education, Social Security and Public Assistance with particular reference to Title II and Title X; the United States Library of Congress, Services to the Blind; the Wagner-O'Day Act as administered by the Department of Labor; The Act to Promote the Education of the Blind as administered by the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the American Association of Workers for the Blind in Convention assembled this 12th day of July, 1957, in Chicago, Illinois, communicate to the Honorable John Kennedy, United States Senator of Massachusetts, and such other of his colleagues who might be immediately concerned, the fact that he or they either are not fully informed or have been improperly advised about the alleged basis for such legislation as reported; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislative Committee and the Membership of this Association take whatever steps are necessary and feasible to provide Senator Kennedy and any others concerned with authentic information concerning all phases of social, educational, and rehabilitation services for the blind, and to provide them with an opportunity to understand that all of the provisions of this Bill are already guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States, and furthermore, most federally authorized programs of benefits already provide through statutes or regulations opportunity for fair hearings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Senator Kennedy and all other members of the United States Congress be advised that inadequacies both in quantity and quality of this nation's programs for prevention of blindness and services to blinded individuals could more effectively be evaluated through the passage of other bills currently before the Congress (HR. 1955 and S.2385) which would create a Presidential Commission on Problems of Blindness, and favorable consideration of this legislation is profoundly recommended by this Association.

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BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

TWELFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

RESOLUTION No. 9

WHEREAS the Blinded Veterans Association, Inc., is a national membership organization composed entirely of blind individuals; and

WHEREAS this Association has, since its inception in 1945, recognized its constitutional right to organize nationally and locally without restriction by any Federal or local laws; and

WHEREAS the Association does, in fact, work closely with Federal State, and local governmental and voluntary agencies serving blind persons, and has, in turn, been consulted by these agencies; and

WHEREAS the Association, in its efforts to promote higher standards of service for all blind people in the United States, recognizes the value of a constructive approach to achieve this objective; and

WHEREAS S.2411 and H.R. 8609, which have been introduced in the 85th Congress, appear redundant in the light of the above and would seem to serve no practical purpose, and, in fact, may be detrimental to the best interests of all blind persons; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the members of the Blinded Veterans Association in National convention assembled in the City of Hartford in the State of Connecticut on August 24, 1957, do hereby reaffirm their faith and trust in the basic rights guaranteed all citizens by the Constitution and Bill of Rights of the United States and believe no further legislation is needed to guarantee these rights to blind persons; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the members of the Blinded Veterans Association do hereby offer the full cooperation of the Association and its members to members of Congress interested in raising standards of services to blind persons; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to all members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States; to the executive directors of the American Association of Workers for the Blind, the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, the American Foundation for the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind, and the Council of State Agencies for the Blind; and to the officials of government and voluntary agencies serving blind persons in the United States.

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as private bills in the Daily Digest of the Congressional Record rather than as public bills. Private bills provide for payments for the relief of an individual, usually someone who has a claim against the government for financial redress. It should be noted here that the BVA through their own bulletin has announced their intention not to press for hearings on these bills but would prefer that they be allowed to die in the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

H.R.9522.--A Bill to amend the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 to authorize the disposal of surplus property to certain welfare agencies. (Introduced by Representative Keating of New York) Under the present Law surplus materials can go only to medical institutions, health centers, schools, colleges, and related organizations. The proposed bill would broaden eligibility to include agencies such as the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, Travelers Aid, and similar organizations.

FEDERAL GRANT-IN-AID PROGRAMS

The Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee of the House Government Operations Committee has opened an important new phase of its extensive studies in the field of relations between the federal government and state and local governments--studies which include the entire range of federal grant-in-aid programs. The subcommittee is now planning a number of regional meetings this Fall, and tentatively these are planned for the following cities:

Boston	Kansas City	New Orleans
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In general, the subcommittee is seeking testimony bearing on two types of problems:

1. Whether the existing division of responsibility between the federal and other levels of government is proper and satisfactory.

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   NOTE: Organizations interested in presenting testimony at any of these regional meetings should write to Representative L. H. Fountain, Chairman, Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee, House Committee on Government Operations, Washington 25, D. C.

APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1958

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Health, Education and Welfare--In Summary, the Appropriation Bill for fiscal year 1958 provides: $40,000,000 for grants to the states under Section 2; $1,500,000 for extension and improvement under Section 3; $3,600,000 for special projects under Section 4; $4,440,000 for training of rehabilitation personnel; $1,330,000 for salaries and expenses of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; $4,000,000 new authority for expenditures for rehabilitation centers under the Hill-Burton Bill. The allotment base for Section 2 will be $53,000,000.

Further information and copies of the above bills may be secured directly from: H. C. Walker, Legislative Analyst, American Foundation for the Blind, 442 Investment Building, 1511 K. Street, Washington 5, D. C.

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A. F. B.

BULLETIN

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New Federal Legislation

Public Law 85-308 (S.2434)--An Act to amend the Act entitled "An Act to provide books for the adult blind". This legislative measure in effect removes from the law itself any reference to a specific maximum for appropriations so that each year the Library of Congress may now ask Congress for adequate sums to carry further the anticipated expanded programs. This Act was approved September 7, 1957.

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S.2385 and H.R.1955.--are two measures which are closely related and should be read together. Each proposes the establishment of a Presidential Study Commission to examine services for the blind throughout the United States. They provide for complete exploration of the existing services to blind persons and differ only in structural detail. Hearings were held on these measures during the First Session of Congress and it is anticipated that further action can be expected in the Second Session.

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H.R.9421 and H.R.9564.--Private bills introduced by Congressman Patterson of Connecticut designed to obtain the financial resources to assist the BVA to carry out its full program. It should be noted that both H.R.9421 and H.R.9564 are listed

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